

A D D I T I O N S
TO THE
A D D R E S S
TO
Protestant Dissenters,
ON THE SUBJECT OF THE
L O R D ' s S U P P E R,
With some CORRECTIONS of it;

A N D
A Letter to the Author of the PROTESTANT
DISSENTER 's Answer to it.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

— *Speaking the Truth in Love.*
PAUL.

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ADDITIONS

TO THE

ADDAEAS

TO

Ælfric's Digeries

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

Lord's Supper

With some Corrections of it



A portion of the Addaeas
presented to the
British Museum

BY ROBERT PRESTON, M.A.

London

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

HAVING of late given more particular attention to the subject of the Lord's Supper, I am convinced that some parts of my *Address to Protestant Dissenters* concerning it need illustration and amendment. I have now added such improvements, and printed them, together with some larger additions. Some of the corrections had occurred to myself, some were suggested by my particular friends, and some by the *Protestant Dissenter's Answer*.

N. B. (b) in the references to the pages, means from the bottom.

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A D D I T I O N S
TO THE
ADDRESS to PROTESTANT DIS-
SENTERS on the Subject of the LORD'S
SUPPER, with some Corrections of it.

PRÉFACE, p. 13. the few quotations I have had occasion to make from the Fathers are copied, with little or no variation, from *Dr. King's Constitution of the Primitive Church*; and therefore I have not made any reference to their own works, as I should have done, if I had examined them, or pretended to examine them myself. (a)

B P. 17.

(a) The author of the *Protestant Dissenters Answer* to my Address, discovers a want both of candour, and of an acquaintance with the custom of writers in his animadversions on this subject, p. 131. No writer, I believe, who had occasion

int

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P. 17, l. 1. and as I shall, also, endeavour to take in every other consideration that can throw light upon the subject, you will, by this means, see, &c.

—l. 14. *i. e.* Let this wine bring to your remembrance my death and sufferings. As this event completes the scheme by which sinful men are to be reformed, and restored to the divine favour; my blood may be said, (in allusion to the sacrifices under the law) to be shed for the remission of sins.

P. 24, l. 1. (*b*) that is, let him examine his real views and motives, and consider that, &c.

tion to quote a common fact in the English history would think of mentioning the historian, or the collector of history, from whom he copied it. In this case I could least of all expect to succeed as a plagiarist, if that had been any object with me, when the book I made use of is almost in every body's hands. There is, at least, hardly any dissenting minister, of my acquaintance, who is not possessed of it.

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P. 30, l. 7. who are arrived at years of discretion, and whose lives are such as give no just reason to question their sincerity.

P. 31, l. 3. is by no means necessary, but may be expedient, with respect to those persons who may be suspected of a design to impose upon them. Were the nature of the institution universally understood, and no imposition intended, this action itself would be the declaration, &c.

P. 32, l. 16. or rather, it is a profession, &c.

P. 33. (b) Notwithstanding the Lord's Supper be properly a profession of a man's being simply a christian; christianity in general, and this institution of it in particular, may be so corrupted, that a sincere christian ought in conscience to refrain from joining in the celebration of it. In the church of Rome, the service is so conducted, that I believe it is impossible to communicate without being guilty of idolatry. A Protestant, therefore, might as

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well burn incense to an idol, as receive the eucharist at the hands of a Romish priest.

P. 34, l. 4. I answer, that every christian society hath a clear right to refuse admission to those whom they believe not to be christians; and those whose conduct is such, as gives just reason to question their sincerity, though, in words, they profess themselves such; as also, those who are guilty of such vices as are a scandal, &c.

— l. 20. excommunicated, and at the same time excluded from their public assemblies, as well as the Lord's Supper; being considered as persons unfit for their society or company. Since the consequence of excommunication was exclusion from their religious assemblies altogether, I do not see that they had any idea of the Lord's Supper being more sacred, solemn, or awful than any other part of the service. The idea of such a difference in those ordinances, as could lead them to think there might be a propriety in attending upon

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upon the one, and not upon the other, may, therefore, be concluded to have been of later origin, and consequently to have arisen from something else than the genuine principles of christianity. It was a long time before there was any such idea as excommunication from the Lord's supper only.

P. 35, l. 13. a more solemn, or *formal* thing than the other, but precisely of the same nature. They differ only in this, that in one case I express my sentiments by an *action*, or ceremony, and in the other by *words* bearing the very same construction. It cannot be said that they differ so much as a common assertion and an oath, which however are both, &c.

P. 35, l. 2. (b) You, therefore, who are afraid to receive the Lord's Supper, have the same reason to be afraid to attend public and christian worship, provided you really join in it.

6 OBSERVATIONS ON

P. 35, l. 20, may almost amount to a declaration, &c,

P. 36, l. 3. If there had been any thing particularly hazardous in receiving the Lord's Supper, more than in joining in other religious exercises; I cannot help thinking that our Lord would, himself, have given some intimation of it, at the time of the institution. But nothing of this kind occurs. I also cannot think, that, if the apostle Paul had solemnly warned the Corinthians of this danger, when he first preached the gospel among them, and no doubt administered the Lord's Supper too, they could ever have fallen into that very indecent and irreverent method of conducting the service. Nay, I cannot conceive how this abuse could have arisen, if the primitive manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper, had not made it something more like a chearful entertainment, than it doth among any sect of Christians that I am acquainted with at present. But our

more

THE LORD's SUPPER. 7

more decent and frugal method is better calculated to prevent abuse.

P. 36, l. 15. which may be recollected without particular preparation. Some argue the propriety of preparation for the Lord's Supper, from its analogy to the Jewish passover, of the preparation to which we read, *John xix.* 14. But this is the only place in which the preparation of the passover is mentioned; and as *Mark xv. 42.* calls the same day the *preparation of the Sabbath*, it probably referred to this, and not to the passover. Besides, that day did not precede the day on which the passover was eaten. Our Lord had eaten it the day before.

P. 43, l. 10. lives. This was exactly agreeable to the maxims of the heathens, who speak in the highest terms of the purity and happiness of the initiated. See *Potter's Antiquities of Greece*, vol. I. p. 390.

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P. 54, l. 8. Many dissenters have gone deeper into this superstition than the divines of the church of England. At least their greater backwardness to attend the Lord's Supper, seems to discover more of a superstitious dread of it. The terms of admission are also more strict among them, which seems to argue the same thing. An account of what is called experiences in religion, &c.

Of

Of the qualifications of communicants.

ABOUT the time of the first planting of christianity, the grossest vices were exceedingly prevalent in all the Gentile world; and according to the testimony of Josephus, the Jews were not less abandoned. The picture that St. Paul draws of them both, towards the beginning of his epistle to the Romans, is indeed shocking.

Now it can hardly be supposed, that when persons of these characters, and who had formed these habits embraced christianity (upon the conviction that Christ was a teacher sent from God) their hearts and lives were instantly, *i. e.* miraculously changed. An excellent parable of our Saviour leads us rather to consider the reception of christianity, as the receiving of seed into the ground, which requires time and cultivation, before it bring forth fruit.

Agreeably

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Agreeably to this, Dr. Lardner supposes, that when sinners were exhorted to *believe and be saved*, the meaning was, that, in consequence of embracing christianity, they would be instructed in the true way of salvation; and that, by attending to its great motives, and habitually observing its precepts, they would in time attain to salvation; and not that they would immediately obtain the true gospel salvation, or have their sins actually forgiven, so as that they would have been received into heaven, if they had died the moment after their being converted and baptized.

The precepts and motives of the gospel are of themselves sufficient (with the usual blessing of God upon our endeavours) to engage men to forsake their vices, and to practice virtue. Indeed the contrary supposition would be a reflection on the wisdom of God, representing him as having provided a means not adequate to the end he proposed to gain by it. If all the conversions

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versions were, strictly speaking, miraculous, and the change of heart and life, which followed the conversion, miraculous too, the divine wisdom (which we so much admire, both in adapting the evidences of the gospel to the minds of men, and in adapting its precepts and motives to work upon their hearts) would have been in vain. Where would be the wisdom of adapting the organization of a seed to the soil in which it is sown, if, after all, it could not grow without such a divine interposition, as would have produced the same effect without any such previous fitness of the one to the other.

If, therefore, there be any such thing as the wisdom of God in the works of nature and providence; and if, consequently, the motives of the gospel produce a change in the hearts and lives of men, by their natural fitness to answer that purpose, it must always (except God were pleased to work a miracle similar to healing the sick or

raising

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raising the dead) have been a gradual thing. And if, upon a man's professing to believe in Christ, and consequently to reform his conduct, he was admitted to christian baptism, and the Lord's Supper, (which I think none will deny) many persons must have been admitted members of the christian church in a very imperfect moral state ; and, as in the parable above-mentioned, many would relapse into their former vices ; tho' their being incorporated into a regular body, or church, of christians, would be a great means of confirming them in their christian faith and practice.

Now it appears to me, that no man was refused admission into the christian church, if he professed faith and repentance, and if nothing in his conduct at that time gave just reason to suspect his sincerity ; and also that no person was cut off from the society by excommunication, till his conduct, notwithstanding regular admonitions, was notoriously

oufly inconsistent with his profession, and generally such as was a scandal to the christian name. According to the rule of our Saviour, *Mat. xviii. 15, 18.* an offence, that finally ended in excommunication, was originally a sin (*εξυ αμαρτνη*) of one person against another ; but, considering the great patience and forbearance which our Lord always recommended to his disciples, we cannot suppose but that it must have been some gross injury ; and it must have shewn a bad disposition indeed, to persist in such injurious conduct, in spite of all remonstrances, private and public, and in contempt of the greatest church censure. The christians at Jerusalem, indeed, made some difficulty of admitting St. Paul to their society, but not on account of any scruples about his moral character. Having been a notorious persecutor, they were *afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple*, but suspecting him to be a spy. *Act. ix. 26.*

That

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That this was the state of the christian church in the times of the apostles appears from their writings. They address the members of those churches, to whom their epistles are directed, as *Saints* and the *peculiar people of God*, because, by embracing christianity, they professed themselves to be such. Many of them, no doubt, were truly such; and, in a judgement of charity, the majority might be supposed to be such. But at the same time it cannot be denied, that the frequent admonitions, and severe reproofs which the apostles gave them, demonstrate, that *all* the members of their societies were far from deserving the same character, and also that many of them had but a very imperfect knowledge of christianity; and yet they are not said to have been exposed to any particular hazard in consequence of their continuing in christian communion, and none are mentioned as being excommunicated, except in cases of very flagrant offences.

In

In the church of Corinth, of the members of which the Apostle Paul says, that they were *sanctified, and called to be saints*, there was so much *envying, strife, and division*, that he says they were *carnal*, and *walked as men*, i. e. as other men, or *Gentiles*, and not as *christians*, 1 Cor. iii. 3. Brothers went to law with brothers, and before unbelievers, vi. 6. nay they *wronged, and defrauded even their brethren*, v. 8. speaking of his intended visit to them, he says, xii. 6. *I fear lest, when I come I shall not find you such as I would; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, and lest when I come again, my God will bumble me among you, and I shall bewail many who have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed.* Yet we do not find that any of them were ordered to be excommunicated, except the *incestuous person* who had married his father's wife; which was a crime, as the apostle says, *not so much*

as

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as named among the Gentiles; and those with whom they were cautioned not to eat were persons guilty of very gross vices, v. 10. *If any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner.*

The ideas conveyed by all these terms are not equally offensive. Covetousness, for instance, seems to be less obnoxious than several of the rest; but when we see that these characters are ranked together, and the meaning of most of the terms is obvious, as that of *fornicator*, *idolater*, and *drunkard*, we may reasonably conclude, that the rest are to be understood as of such a *degree* of the vice, as to be pretty equally notorious and scandalous. An exceedingly covetous man, and especially one whose greediness of gain leads him to fraud and injustice, is as much a marked character, and as hateful a one, as a *fornicator*, an *idolater*, or *drunkard*.

When

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When St. Paul was at Rome he observed; Phil. i. 11. that there were some persons in that city who *preached Christ of envy and strife and contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to his bonds*, perhaps intending to excite his envy and jealousy, or to draw upon him the resentment of the governing powers, by their officiousness in publishing the gospel. But since the apostle says he even *rejoiced* at this, we may certainly conclude that he connived at it, and did not cause those insincere preachers to be excommunicated.

In the same epistle, iii. 18. he admonishes the Philippians *not to walk as many did*, of whom he had frequently warned them, who, though christians in name (and probably in church communion) were *enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end was destruction, whose God was their belly, whose glory was their shame, who minded earthly things.*

When the same apostle admonished the christians at Colosse, Col. iii. 1. to *mor-*

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tify their members that were of the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry; and to put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, with filthy communication, and not to lie one to another; vices in which he says they had sometimes walked; it seems evident that he supposed they were not entirely free from them at the time that he wrote.

Many other instances might be produced to the same purpose, but the quotations would be tedious. See particularly Thess. iv. 6. 1 Tim, vi. 3. &c. Tit. i. 10. James i. 21, 26. 1 Peter ii. 1, 11. 2 Peter i. 9. 3 John 9. and Jude 11.

In all the seven churches of Asia, there were many things much amiss. In the church of Sardis, which is not represented as in the worst situation, it is only said, that there were *a few names that had not defiled their garments*, and that were worthy to *walk with Christ.* Rev. iii. 4, and yet the rest

THE LORD's SUPPER. 19

rest are not said to have been improper members of a christian society, nor are any of them ordered to be excluded.

We certainly, therefore, ought to make a difference between those who may be permitted to communicate with a christian church, and those who will finally be admitted into heaven; and our real opinion with respect to the latter ought not to be our rule with respect to the former.

I would only observe farther, that it is hardly possible to suppose that the primitive christian churches in general consisted of persons whose characters answer to our idea of *holy* and *sanctified*, when even an *elder* was required *not to be given to wine*, *no striker*, *not greedy of filthy lucre*, *not a brawler* or *covetous*, 1 Tim. iii. 3. and the *deacons* *not to be double tongued*, *not to be given to much wine*, *nor greedy of filthy lucre*. In giving directions to appoint such an order of men, (men of the first character and eminence in any of our societies) I dare

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say it would be thought altogether needless, even to mention such disqualifications as these.

In Clemens's epistle to the Corinthians, we find that the spirit of faction, which subsisted in St. Paul's time, had greatly increased, notwithstanding his admonitions. The people had formed a party against their ministers; and, allowing sufficiently for exaggeration in the style of Clemens, who wrote to them upon the occasion, we cannot but, from his epistle, conceive a very unfavourable idea of their general temper and character: see the following extract from Bp. Wake's translation of that epistle, cap. 3.

All honour and enlargement was given unto you. From hence came emulation, and envy, and strife, and sedition, persecution and disorder, war and captivity. So that they who were of no renown lifted up themselves against the honourable, those of no reputation

“against those that were in respect, the
“foolish against the wise, the young against
“the aged. Therefore righteousness and
“peace are departed from you, because
“every one hath forsaken the fear of
“God, and is grown blind in his faith,
“nor walketh by the rule of God's com-
“mandments, nor liveth as is fitting in
“Christ. But every one follows his own
“wicked lusts, having taken up an un-
“just and wicked envy, by which first
“death entered into the world.”

Considering the state of the Gentile world with respect to virtue, I do not wonder that there were these disorders in the primitive christian churches. It required some time for the genuine spirit of christianity to insinuate itself into them; and I think we may find, by the epistles of Ignatius, and other later writings, that a better disposition generally prevailed sometime afterwards, and continued till the purity of the christian faith and discipline became corrupted.

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Many persons, I believe, are influenced in their ideas concerning the proper members of christian societies by superstitious, and what we may call *monkish* notions of virtue and sanctity ; from which the minds of few persons are entirely free ; and by which they are influenced more than they will acknowledge, and indeed more than they are themselves aware of ; notions that lead us to conceive very falsely concerning a truly christian temper and conduct, and which are, in many respects, unfavourable to real virtue,

The leading idea in this kind of superstition is, that men recommend themselves to the favour of God by what gives pain and mortification to themselves. It may be traced in the maxims and conduct of the Pharisees and Essenes among the Jews, and in the endless variety of austerities devised by different sects of christians. We see it no less influence the conduct of many Mahometans, and various tribes of heathens, particularly those who profess the religion of

of the Brachmans of Indostan. But there is nothing of this in the spirit of the christian religion ; and nothing in the precepts or example of Christ gives the least countenance to it.

As the founders of all other religions, I believe, have distinguished themselves by the invention of some whimsical mortification, the singularity of the christian religion in this respect is so remarkable, and so consonant to reason, that it almost amounts to a proof of its divinity. Christian virtue is an active and cheerful thing, and requires no pain or mortification, except what is necessary to break the force of bad habits, and to discontinue any sinful practices we may have been accustomed to, in order to cease to do evil and learn to do well; whereas the austeries referred to above, terminate in afflicting the body, without contributing at all to the improvement of the mind.

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The doctrines of the gospel are eminently calculated to inforce the practice of virtue, especially by the revelation of a future life, to which we shall be raised at the second coming of Christ; who will render to every man according to his works. A firm belief of, and an habitual attention to, these important truths, tend to give us a superiority of mind to this world, enable us to forego all the pleasures and advantages of this life, when they cannot be obtained with a good conscience, and make us to fear none of the things that we can suffer in the practice of our duty; knowing that our reward is great in heaven, and that we shall be more than recompenced at the resurrection of the just.

The operation of these principles is evident, and I believe would be much more generally efficacious, if men were not discouraged from attempting the christian character at all, by the idea of its being something above their reach, something that requires such constant and severe spiritual

trial exercises, as are almost inconsistent with the usual pursuits, and a tolerable enjoyment of life.

It is but an imperfect character that those who give the most attention to the principles of christianity can attain, and we are but in a progress towards perfection; and though it behoves every man to cultivate the *virtues of the heart* with the utmost care, and by every exercise that is really adapted to promote them, because the *virtues of the heart* are the only ones that are of value in the sight of God, and indeed the best foundation and security for a good life; yet they are only those that may be called the *virtues of the life*, of which human, and even christian societies can properly take notice. If we go beyond this, we have no sufficient *data*, or evidence to proceed upon, and are in danger of obstructing the progress of virtue rather than promoting it.

Any

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Any person, therefore, who supports what we call *a decent character* in life, and who, if he were interrogated, would profess faith in Christ and obedience to the gospel, is a proper member of the christian church on earth; the discipline, exercises, and various advantages of which are calculated to perfect his character, and, by degrees, to fit him for being a proper member of the church of the first born written in heaven,

From the whole I conclude that, if a person, at the time that he proposes himself to church communion, really intends to live as becomes a christian, he need not have any scruple about joining in the ordinance, though he should question, or even believe that, if he should then die, he would not be fit to enter into heaven ; and that his fellow christians, if they see no reason to question his sincerity at the time, have no authority to refuse him, though they have the same idea of his state.

If

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If we go upon other principles, and estimate a man's fitness to be received into church communion by his fitness for heaven, it appears to me, that no man who hath the least doubt about his salvation ought to communicate. For, as the apostle argues in a similar case, Rom. xiv. 23. *He that doubteth is damned if he eat.* Wherever religion, or morality is concerned, we certainly ought not to act without the full conviction of our minds; and should refrain from acting at all, if we have any doubt concerning the propriety of our conduct; more especially in this case, where there is supposed to be very great hazard in communicating, and none at all in not communicating.

The very idea of the nature and design of the Lord's-Supper, as it is understood by the orthodox dissenters, appears to me to be utterly inconsistent with the spirit of christianity. If we judge of the fitness of a person for church communion by his fitness for heaven, every candidate declares,

in

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in the face of the world, that he thinks himself a favourite of God, and ripe for future glory; and the church, in considering whether they shall receive him or not, are judges of his everlasting state; which implies such a degree of assurance on one side, and encourages such a spirit of haughtiness and censoriousness on the other, as appear to me not to belong to christians, who should be clothed with humility, and judge nothing before the time; and who should least of all usurp the office of Christ, to whom that kind of judgment is committed.

If the righteous disclaim their good works at the day of judgment, can it be supposed that they will plead and proclaim them here? I should therefore think, that, to act upon this principle, and at the same time preserve any appearance of the humility of christians, no person should, directly or indirectly, propose himself for church communion. Others should propose it to him, and if he did consent, it should

should be with great reluctance. For, of the two, it would be rather more decent for others to say, "Sir, we think you to be a "child of God, and fit for heaven, as well "as ourselves," and for him to be persuaded by them to think so well of himself; than that he should first pay himself that compliment, and then convince them that it was just.

That the idea of such a tribunal and such pretensions should have occurred to any but Pharisées, would surprize me, if I did not imagine, that I could account for it, by the history of the corruptions of Christianity

Observations

*Observations on the Lord's Supper being called
a sign, or seal of the covenant of grace.*

SOME divines have affected to call the Lord's Supper *a sign and seal of the covenant of grace*. If by a *sign* of the covenant of grace, be meant nothing more than a *memorial* of the blessings of the gospel, I can have no objection to the term, because I suppose that this rite was expressly instituted for that purpose. When we do any thing *in remembrance of Christ*, we do it to take occasion from it to recollect what Christ has done and suffered for us, in order to accomplish the gracious scheme of our salvation, or our deliverance from sin and misery. Our Lord, also, calls the bread his body, and the wine his blood, apparently with a view to our recollecting, in a more especial manner, the last and most perfect instance of his

love,

THE LORD's SUPPER. 31

love, in giving his body to be crucified, and his blood to be shed for us.

But I do not see in what sense the Lord's supper can with propriety be called a *seal* of the new covenant, or that the scriptures will authorize what I take to be generally understood by it. It is possible, that when divines call the Lord's Supper a seal of the new covenant, they may mean, that it was intended as an *assurance* on God's part, that he would actually confer all the blessings promised by Christ in the gospel. There is no doubt but that God *will* confer these blessings, and fully confirm every thing that our Lord has assured us he will do. Of this he has given us ample assurance, *in that he hath raised him from the dead*. As the apostle Paul says, Rom. i. 4. *He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead*; and Peter says, 1 Pet. i. 4. *That the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*: and

many

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many other texts might be produced to the same purpose.

The resurrection of Christ, therefore, was properly the seal of the new covenant. That this rite of the Lord's Supper was intended to be that assurance, I see no evidence whatever. *Do this in remembrance of me*, which words were expressly designed to inform us concerning the nature and use of the institution, do not convey that idea; and the words, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood*, appear to me to have been added, in order to express on what account we are to remember him, viz. as having, by his death, accomplished the scheme of our salvation. If it were true, that the death of Christ was the seal of the covenant of grace, the Lord's Supper could only be *the memorial of the seal*, and not the seal itself.

When God appointed the rain-bow to be a token, or assurance, that he would no more destroy the world by a flood, this use

THE LORD's SUPPER. 33

use of it was declared in the clearest and strongest manner, Gen. ix. 12. *And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth, &c.*

Also at the institution of the rite of circumcision, the Divine Being, after reciting all the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, says to that patriarch, *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised— and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* Gen. xvii. 10, 11. Appointments of tokens similar to these occur in various other parts of the Jewish history, but we find nothing like this in the institution of the Lord's Supper.

It may be said, that the Divine Being seals, or confirms to us the blessings of the

D gospel,

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gospel, while we are partaking of the Lord's Supper, or in consequence of our partaking of it. In other words, that, by means of this rite, God, by his especial presence, applies the benefits of the gospel, giving the worthy communicants an assurance and foretaste of the blessings of it. This I take to be the meaning of the authors of the Assembly's catechism, when they say that in the sacraments, " Christ, " and the benefits of the new covenant, are, " by sensible signs, represented, sealed; and " applied to believers;" and that, in the Lord's Supper, " the worthy receivers are " by faith made partakers of his body and " blood, with all its benefits, to their spi- " ritual nourishment and growth in grace."

But this, I apprehend, is much more than the scriptures or experience will warrant, and the expectation of any thing of this kind I call enthusiastic, and sure to be disappointed. Eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Christ, doth not convey any such meaning. Indeed, if it were

were

were fact, that all the benefits of the new covenant were actually *sealed* and *applied*, as well as *represented* to worthy communicants, in the act, or in consequence of the act of communion, they would have such an assurance of the pardon of their sins, and of their title to heaven, as I imagine, few persons will pretend to; and I imagine that few persons would believe them, if they should pretend to it.

Some persons may chuse to make use of the language above-mentioned in a qualified sense, meaning, that their faith in Christ, and all christian virtues, are rendered much more lively by the peculiar presence of the spirit of God in this ordinance. I am far from denying the influence of the spirit of God upon the minds of men, according to some established law, or rule (that we may not suppose it to be, in the proper sense of the word, *miraculous*) but I see not a shadow of authority, from the scriptures, for expecting this presence at the Lord's Supper, more than in any other christian ordinance.

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The presence of Christ, whatever may be meant by it, is expressly promised, where *two or three are gathered together in his name*; but it is not said, that they were to be assembled for the purpose of celebrating the Lord's Supper. On the contrary, I believe it is generally understood to refer to their meeting for the purpose of social prayer; and in no place whatever is there any promise made of the particular presence of God, or of Christ, in the Lord's Supper.

It is true, that the action of eating or drinking may be intended to represent our receiving and obeying the gospel of Christ, and consequently our being entitled to the blessings of it; but still this is no more than a *figurative action*, and cannot amount to more than expressing our faith in Christ, our resolution to obey his gospel, and our hope of receiving the rewards of it in *words*; and I appeal to the experience of the most sincere christian if he has not found

found every devotional feeling as lively in the exercise of prayer, as in the act, or in consequence, of receiving the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper.

It will not be said, on any scripture authority, that the prayers that are usually made before, or after the celebration of this ordinance, have any peculiar advantages annexed to them.

The danger of communicating unworthily, cannot, in the nature of things, arise, except either from the indecent manner of administering and attending upon it, or the insincerity of the promises and resolutions that are implied in it, which equally affects prayer, and partaking of the Lord's Supper. They are each an *explicit* or *implicit* resolution to live as becomes the gospel; and the divine displeasure is as expressly denounced against the hypocritical worshipper, as against the unworthy communicant: nay, there are frequent declarations

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of the indignation with which God hears those who draw nigh to him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him ; whereas we should probably never have heard of any danger of communicating unworthily, if it had not been for the scandalous abuse of this rite by the Corinthians.

In no other case, therefore, have we the least authority to conclude, that this danger is of a different nature from that which arises from insincerity in prayer ; and far are we from having any reason to suppose it to be greater. The one, consequently, will require just as much preparation and forethought as the other. I wish that more attention were given to both, but by no means to the one more than the other.

It is the expectation of the above mentioned divine communications of the pardon of sin, or at least of some extraordinary supernatural influence or impressions, that,

that, I say, is enthusiastic; and it is the expectation of some particular judgment upon unworthy communicants, more than what will fall upon insincere worshippers, that I call a superstitious fear. Dissenters, I believe, have a higher idea of the spiritual benefits of this ordinance, (though they may expect less from it as a mere *opus operatum*); and they have more dread of the danger of attending upon it in a state of mind improper for receiving it, than the generality of the members of the church of England; and this appears to me to be the principal reason why it is less generally attended by us. This state of things was the cause of my writing the *Address to Dissenters* on the subject.

A Letter to the author of the Protestant Dissenter's answer to the Free Address on the subject of the Lord's Supper.

Reverend Sir, (a)

I THINK myself obliged to you for the pains you have taken to write and publish your nine letters in answer to my *Address to Protestant Dissenters on the subject of the Lord's Supper*, of which, in a polite card sent along with them, you beg my *candid acceptance, as a token of real respect*. I thank you, because you have led me, as you will see, to correct some mistakes, and to amend some expressions which had inadvertently escaped me, and more especially to make such *additions* to what I had written as appear to me to be favourable to my original and professed design in writing. You must, however, excuse me when I say, that I think your manner of writing is by no means uniformly candid, or respectful,

(a) In some of the Advertisements the Author of this treatise is said to be a minister in London.

A fair and liberal critic will consider the real meaning of an author; and while he animadverts upon that, with the degree of severity which he thinks the nature of the subject requires, he will overlook every thing else, and attribute slight inconsistencies to inadvertence; unless he think them to be such contradictions, as those persons only are apt to run into, who have not truth for their object. In general you seem not to question my sincerity in what I write; but in one place, p. 104, you insinuate, that my expressions are *designedly calculated to convey false and injurious ideas.*

To me, Sir, you appear through your whole performance to have erred greatly on the head of fairness. Indeed there is hardly any thing that you pretend is wanting in my treatise, but what you yourself actually find in it, though not in the very place where you expected it, or not expressed in such a manner as you could have wished; but I shall not trouble you, or the public, with a minute

nute reply; especially since you confess a dread of my *abilities to discover faults in your writing, and to turn many parts of it into ridicule*, p. 132.

The only view I have in writing to you is to observe, that you and I do not really differ in our sentiments on this subject, so much as the world may imagine, from reading what each of us has written. In your whole chapter concerning the advantages that arise from celebrating the Lord's Supper, there are but few that you yourself have not found in my treatise; and the rest I have no objection to. As far as they are peculiar to the Lord's Supper, I think they are sufficiently implied in what I have written; however I never meant to exclude them.

When you say, p. 104, that you do not *imagine that God is in any other sense present in the sacrament, than he is with good men in general, in attending his institutions; and that you do not pretend to a more immediate intercourse with him upon that occasion, than in other exercises of devotion*, you say all that I ever meant

meant to contend for; but I do not agree with you in thinking that the persons I censure do not imagine, or pretend to more than this. The writers of the Assembly's Catechism certainly meant more, when they asserted that, *by giving and receiving bread and wine, the worthy receivers are, by faith, made partakers of the body and blood of Christ, with all its benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; and that by these sensible signs Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.*

Bishop Burnet, also, certainly meant more than you do, when he said with respect to the sacraments, that *Christ does still accompany them with a particular presence in them and a blessing upon them; so that we, coming to them with minds duly prepared, do certainly receive, in and with them, particular largesses of the favour and bounty of God.*

If something more was not imagined to be done on God's part, as well as on ours, in receiving the Lord's Supper, than in other

religious

religious exercises, how came it to be considered as so much more hazardous to communicate than to pray ; when in prayer we frequently make as solemn professions of obedience to Christ as we possibly can make, consequently make ourselves as culpable if we do not live up to them ; and when we expect the divine presence and blessing in proportion to our sincerity and real devotion. All the difference is, that, in one case we make the profession by an *outward sign*, and in the other by *express words*, bearing the very same construction.

You yourself, in more than one place, make the guilt of communicating unworthily to consist in *professing a falsehood* and *declaring what is not true*, p. 44, 46. If then the guilt, and consequently the danger of communicating unworthily consist in declaring what is not true, it does not consist in the mere *manner* in which the declaration is made ; for words and actions may express the very same thing ; so that you perfectly agree with me in taking away

away all real distinction (that is, with respect to *guilt* and *danger*) between this ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and any other, in which the same or similar declarations are made, particularly prayer.

Few general prayers, I believe, are made without confession of sin, and profession of repentance and reformation of heart and life. If, therefore, men be not sincere in these declarations, they ought not to make them; and it should be considered as a thing equally dangerous to make them in the form of solemn prayer, or in the form of receiving the Lord's Supper; and if we could prevent it, the man who cannot make the declaration *to live as becomes a christian*, ought no more to be permitted to join in public prayer, in which the minister makes that declaration in the name of all the people, than to join in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

I agree with you that there is great danger in both, for it is trifling with, and

insulting the greatest and best of beings (but one who will forgive this, and every other offence not persisted in) but I cannot agree with you, p. 123. in thinking that there is more hazard in one than in the other. I do not see that, upon your own principles, there can be the least difference in these cases; and yet I appeal to any person, who is acquainted with the opinions and prejudices of the Dissenters, whether it is not generally imagined by them, that there is a very great difference in these cases.

Is it not notorious that many persons not only join in publick prayer, but even pray themselves, with great solemnity and fervour, both in publick and private, and yet dare not receive the Lord's Supper, though they earnestly wish to do it? Whence came the idea and custom of what is called *fencing the table* in Scotland, any more than fencing the publick prayers of the church?

No

No person, I imagine, ever meant, that the divine being was actually more present in one place than in another, or with any person at one time more than another; but by the divine presence we mean his operations and influence. And in this sense, certainly, many persons do imagine that God is more present with good men in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, than on any other occasion.

I do not think that you and I differ much with respect to the guilt and hazard of communicating unworthily, which it has been my principal object to set in a clear light; and as to what I fancy will prove to be the only thing in which we differ materially, you agree with me, p. 16, that it cannot be expected I should consider any doctrine as taught in the Lord's Supper, which I do not believe to be a doctrine of scripture. Now I own that I am far from thinking, with you, that it is a doctrine of the scriptures, that the blessings which God bestows upon us are *pure ased of him by his son's death*, p. 35. On the contrary,

I believe

I believe that they are all freely given to us of God, and that God is so far from being the receiver on this occasion, that the scriptures represent him as the giver. Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.*

But I fancy you will agree with me, that it would not be worth our while to take occasion, from this subject of the Lord's Supper, to enter into a particular discussion of the doctrine of atonement, though I earnestly wish that pious and learned men would consider that subject impartially and fully. Our sentiments on this subject are allowed, on all hands, to be the foundation of very different hypotheses concerning the whole scheme of christianity, and it has not been so thoroughly canvassed as I could wish. Permit me, Sir, to recommend to your attention what has been written in the *Theological Repository* on that subject by a person who signs CLEMENS, and examine it, not with a view to find little inaccuracies

racies and inconsistencies in the composition, but to consider the spirit and force of his arguments.

If you be a young man, I shall not so much despair of a change in your sentiments as you do with respect to me, and though I am not an old man, it is possible that, at your age, I thought as you now do on this subject. I did so after I was a preacher. How this will affect your conjectures with respect to the motives of the change in my sentiments, I leave you to judge as you please. I think such allusions to my education and private history, as both you and Mr. Venn have recourse to, are too personal, and very improperly thrown out before the public.

I shall only say with respect to your conjectures (concerning which you bid me *ask myself*, p. 97.) that every man, believing that he has formed his own sentiments impartially, and upon just views of things, must

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have some different hypothesis to account for the false judgments of others. In my case, you think that *pique* and *resentment* had the chief influence. But let us *judge* *nothing before the time*, for we *must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed*. I hope that I shall endeavour so to judge, and so to act, as *not to be ashamed before him at his coming*.

That there is much real difference of opinion among christian ministers is evident; and I have no doubt, but that this, as well as all other seeming evils, will appear to have answered a good purpose; in many cases, I am convinced, that there is much less difference than is imagined, from the different phraseology we adopt. Many dissenting ministers, availing themselves of mere verbal distinctions, especially with respect to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, not only secure the reputation, and other advantages, of orthodoxy; but studiously throw

throw an odium upon others, as *beterodox*, whose sentiments they know to be, in reality, not at all different from their own.

There are circumstances, in which it will, doubtless, be prudent and right for a man to conceal his sentiments, if he can do it without dissimulation; but I have always chosen to lean rather to the other extreme; and had all, who think as I do in matters of religion, acted with scrupulous integrity and honesty, I am convinced it would have been much better for the interest of truth and of virtue too; tho' I am far from thinking that those who have acted on different maxims have not had the best intentions.

I do not think, as you insinuate with respect to me, that you have *designedly* misrepresented the sentiments of the Dissenters concerning the Lord's Supper; but I suppose that you, thinking pretty rationally on this subject yourself, imagine that others

do so too, and also, that the phraseology you have been accustomed to is expressive of such rational sentiments. Whereas I think that the phraseology in use among us, with respect to this subject, is not consistent with rational or scriptural principles, but took its rise from notions that are irrational, unscriptural, and superstitious; notions which you and I equally disclaim, but which we take very different methods to exterminate. You deny the existence of the superstition, and would accommodate the phraseology to reason. I would combat the superstitious principle itself, and discontinue the phraseology that is grounded upon it. I would even disuse a *scriptural phrase*, if I had no hope of making it generally understood, in a sense agreeable to reason, and the true meaning of the sacred writers.

As you seem desirous of entering into a fair discussion of the merits of the question, concerning *the nature and use of the Lord's Supper*,

Supper, and to undertake what Mr. Venn entered upon, under great disadvantage, and what he would pursue under much greater; you can have no objection to my requesting your attention to what I have advanced in the *Additions*, and also to the following queries, calculated, as I think, to bring the dispute to a *fair issue*; and I beg you would not think yourself obliged to accommodate what you may write for the future to any thing you have already written. Of this I have set you an example myself.

1. When we are commanded to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ, is it not the same thing as if we were enjoined to take that opportunity of recollecting what Christ has done and suffered for us, that is, what we *believe* that he has done and suffered for us?
2. Is not a command of this nature a call upon every person who is convinced that Christ *deserves* to be thus remembered

and obeyed, to remember him in this manner ?

3. Are not all persons included in this description, who, if they were interrogated, would say they were christians ?

4. Is not every thing that can be advanced, concerning the proper qualifications of communicants, to be deduced by way of *inference*, from the consideration of what is implied in the declaration of a man's being a christian ?

5. Is it possible that this declaration should contain more than a present resolution to live as becomes a christian ?

6. Doth not all the *guilt*, and consequently all the *danger*, of communicating unworthily, arise from this declaration not being sincere ? *i.e.* from a person not really intending to live as becomes a christian at the time that he makes it ?

7. Is

7. Is it not customary to make declarations similar to this in prayer ?

8. If the declarations be made with the same seriousness, are not the guilt and danger of insincerity the same in both cases ?

9. If there be any difference, is not the guilt of acting in an unchristian manner, after a solemn *verbal declaration* of the contrary, more aggravated than after an *action* that is only *construed to imply* that declaration ? since a person may say, that he could eat and drink in remembrance of Christ, and recollect, with gratitude and pleasure, what he had done for mankind, without making any promise, at that particular time, of living as becomes a christian ? It is nowhere expressly said in the scriptures, that we do make such a promise at that particular time ; and the only mention that is made of communicating *unworthily* is in a case where the guilt is not said to have consisted in the insincerity of any declaration,
but

but in the improper and indecent manner in which the rite was performed.

10. Admitting that the above mentioned promise is always implied, ought we to make any difference with respect to the qualifications of the persons who may be permitted or encouraged to join in prayer, and in the celebration of the Lord's Supper?

11. Since we pray, or are exhorted to pray, much more frequently than we communicate, should not the warnings against the guilt of insincerity in the former case be more frequent and more earnest than in the latter?

12. If the preceding questions be answered in the affirmative, is it not evident that those persons, who join in prayer, in which they profess obedience to the gospel, and yet dare not receive the Lord's Supper, are in-

influenced by principles that are justly called superstitious?

13. Is not the custom of solemn preparation, previous to receiving the Lord's Supper, a proof that it has been placed in too high a rank of importance, with respect to prayer, and other religious exercises?

14. Is not the opinion of the unfitness of a person, who has preached and prayed in public many years (but who has not been ordained) to administer either baptism or the Lord's Supper, a proof of the existence of some superstitious notion concerning the sacraments?

15. Is not the unwillingness of many Dissenters to receive the bread and wine except from the hands of the minister himself, and sometimes of *their own minister*, a confirmation of the same charge of superstition?

16. Is not the custom of requiring an account of a person's *experience* in religion,

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before

before he be admitted to communicate, when the same person is admitted to pray in public, a proof of the same superstition?

17. Is it not for the interest of truth, of christianity, and of virtue, that these superstitious notions be traced to their source, and exploded?

For my own part, I am fully persuaded, that all this superstition had the same source with almost every other corruption of christian doctrine and discipline, having been introduced by converts from other religions; and that though a great part of this, as well as of other abuses, is now rectified, a great deal yet remains to be done; and I doubt not but, by one instrument or other, Christ will at length *thoroughly purge his floor of them all*, and that all the *chaff, bay and stubble*, that have been built upon the *foundation of the apostles and prophets*, will be utterly consumed.

You, Sir, think that my treatise on the Lord's supper has a *very dangerous tendency in a practical view*, pref. p. 7. and, thinking in that manner, you do well to caution your readers against it. On the contrary, I think that the tendency of my treatise is to restore to its primitive purity and use, an institution calculated to unite christians together under Christ their common head; and I meant to assist in throwing down that superstitious barrier, which, in a great measure, forbids its being approached, or made use of at all.

As my views, I am conscious, are *up-right*, and I believe *just*, I hope I shall not have written without some success; and I shall think success in any attempts to restore the genuine purity of christian faith or practice to be a much nobler object than any other subject of literary pursuit.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your very Humble Servant,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

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